

VZCZCXRO4994

OO RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHNP RUEHPW RUEHROV RUEHSL

DE RUEHRL #1622/01 3580932

ZNY SSSSS ZZH

O 240932Z DEC 09

FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6133

INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RHMFIS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY

RHMFIS/HQ USAF RAMSTEIN AB GE PRIORITY

RHMFIS/CDRUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GE PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BERLIN 001622

NOFORN

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/23/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [NATO](#) [GM](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: GERMANY/AFGHANISTAN: MOD STAFF PUSHES FOR TROOP  
INCREASE AGAINST INCREASING POLITICAL SKEPTICISM

REF: A. BERLIN 1601

[1](#)B. BERLIN 1554

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES GREG DELAWIE. REASONS: 1.4 (B) AND (D  
)

[1](#)1. (S/NF) SUMMARY. The MOD staff is recommending that the German government seek an increase of 1,500 in the troop ceiling for the Bundeswehr in Afghanistan after the January 28 London Conference. Publicly, Defense Minister zu Guttenberg has remained non-committal about any troop increase, while FM Westerwelle has joined CSU Chair Seehofer and opposition politicians in expressing skepticism about the need or desirability of sending additional troops. The MOD dismisses arguments that it could create the additional necessary headroom under the existing ceiling of 4,500 by restructuring its current presence and says that it will not be able to implement COMISAF's partnering concept without additional troops. There are still too many variables, including the outcome of the London Conference and the course of the Kunduz air strike investigation, to be able to assess how the Chancellor will finally come down on this issue. However, in the end, Merkel seems likely to seek a compromise position that can win over a respectable number of opposition politicians to the government side in order to preserve the tradition and practice of obtaining broad majorities in favor of overseas deployments. END SUMMARY.

JANUARY 4 SHOWDOWN

[1](#)2. (S/NF) According to MFA and Chancellery sources, Chancellor Merkel will be meeting January 4 with the four ministers with direct involvement in Afghanistan (i.e., FM Westerwelle, Defense Minister zu Guttenberg, Interior Minister de Maiziere and Development Minister Niebel) to discuss their respective plans and proposals for German engagement in Afghanistan. This will begin the formal process of preparing for the January 28 London Conference and will provide the first indication of the Chancellor's thinking on the question of additional troops. Meanwhile, FM Westerwelle and former UN Special Representative for Afghanistan Tom Koenigs (Greens) this week joined a growing chorus of German politicians across the political spectrum publicly expressing skepticism about the need or wisdom of sending more German troops to Afghanistan.

MOD STAFF RECOMMENDS TROOP INCREASE

[1](#)3. (S/NF) The MOD staff is recommending to zu Guttenberg that he make the case at the January 4 meeting for increasing the troop ceiling by 1,500, from the current 4,500. Some 700 of the new troops would be devoted to conducting or supporting

the training of the Afghan national security forces; 300 would go to Kunduz to beef up combat strength there; and 500 would be held in reserve. The MOD working-level assessment is that Germany will not be able to achieve its two key goals in the north -- i.e., stabilizing the security situation and implementing the new COMISAF partnering concept -- without these additional troops. Even with these extra soldiers, Germany will not be able to implement partnering on the U.S.-recommended one-to-one level. Instead, the plan is to partner each infantry ANA Kandak (about 600 soldiers) in the north with a German infantry company (about 120 strong), for a roughly one-to-five ratio.

¶4. (S/NF) According to MFA sources, the allotment of 700 for training also includes 150 troops to provide the necessary force protection for the 10 additional police mentoring teams that Germany plans to deploy in 2010. Notwithstanding Westerwelle's recent comments, MFA ISAF Action Officer Lukas Wasielewski tells us that the foreign minister is now aware that his proposals for significantly increasing Germany's contribution to the stand-up and training of the Afghan police cannot be accomplished without the security and force protection that only the military can provide. Our contacts at the MFA, MOD and Chancellery also emphasize that trying to make a distinction between "combat troops" versus troops that engage in training -- as both SPD Chair Gabriel and Caucus Leader Steinmeier have done in the past week in ruling out additional combat troops -- does not accord with reality, since under the partnering concept, training involves accompanying the Afghans on combat operations.

BERLIN 00001622 002 OF 002

¶5. (S/NF) Many politicians have expressed the view -- both in private to us and publicly -- that there are too many German soldiers sitting in Mazar-e Sharif "doing nothing" and that MOD should be able to create additional headroom by restructuring its presence and eliminating unnecessary administrative positions at the RC-North HQ. Deputy Director of MOD Policy Planning Staff BG Walter Huhn reminded us that Mazar is the logistical hub for the entire northern region and that he saw little "fat" to cut there.

EQUIPPING AS WELL AS TRAINING?

¶6. (S/NF) The Chancellor's own chief military advisor, COL Erich Vad, agrees with the MOD assessment that additional German troops are necessary, but thinks that the original desire for an increase of 2,000-2,500 in the troop ceiling is simply beyond what is now politically possible. He supports a more modest increase (1,000 to 1,500) and believes that some additional headroom for combat forces can be created through restructuring of the current Bundeswehr presence. Vad thinks that Germany should not only do more on training, but also more on arming and equipping the Afghans. He has proposed equipping the ANA Kandak in Kunduz with 40 German Marder infantry fighting vehicles, at the cost of approximately 1 million Euros per IFV. He believes that true partnering with the Afghans will be difficult if they go on operations in unarmored pickup trucks next to Germans in armor personnel carriers and IFVs. He acknowledges the challenges of training a mostly illiterate ANA on a complicated weapons system and sustaining this capability over the long run, but believes this kind of equipping is necessary to enable the Afghans to eventually assume responsibility for their own security.

COMMENT

¶7. (S/NF) The Chancellor herself will make the final decision after the London Conference on whether to seek from the Bundestag an increase in the current ceiling of 4,500 troops and if so, by how much. There are still too many variables, including the outcome of the London Conference and the course of the Kunduz air strike investigation, to be able to assess how the Chancellor will finally come down on this issue. It

seems safe to conclude, however, that there is little prospect of the 2,500 increase that was contemplated this summer and early fall. A modest increase of 1,000 to 1,500 still appears feasible, but it is by no means a sure thing. Our contacts put the odds at no better than 50-50, especially since the SPD leadership has already come out against sending additional combat troops. The Chancellor will have to make the case that additional troops -- including combat troops -- are necessary in order for Germany to increase its civilian assistance and to accelerate the training of the Afghan national security forces, both of which almost all parties favor. In the end, Merkel will seek a compromise position that can win over a respectable number of opposition politicians to the government side -- Chancellery Chief of Staff Pofalla told the Ambassador recently that support by 20 percent or more of the SPD caucus would be sufficient. Of course, splitting the SPD and the rest of the opposition depends on the CDU-CSU/FDP coalition being absolutely unified in seeking a troop increase and that still remains questionable.

DELAWIE